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Russell Newton

School of Divinity, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK

School of Divinity, New College, Mound Place, Edinburgh, EH1 2LX.

Email: russell.newton@ed.ac.uk

ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7920-3278

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In early modern Scotland, both ministers and the laity used typology as a key way of interpreting the Bible, discerning a variety of powerful ways that biblical types resonated in their own context. This article focuses on one of the most frequently expounded types in this period: the brazen serpent. It begins by exploring how its appearances in Numbers, 2 Kings, and John's Gospel were expounded in Scotland, showing that while types were principally figures of Christ they also had a variety of edifying and rhetorical applications. This article then takes William Guild's use of the brazen serpent in his typological handbook, commentaries, and sermons as a case study, to illustrate how typology functioned in practice, contending that biblical types played an important role in allowing early modern exegetes to shift or reinforce their expositions, without resorting to more figurative methods of interpretation that were frequently rejected by Reformed theologians.

Keywords: bible; exegesis; typology; reformed; Scotland

Introduction

The First Book of Discipline, published in 1560, set out how the Scottish kirk was to be governed. With regards to its worship services, it insisted that the "Gospell be truely and openly preached in every Church and Assembly of this realme", and explained that by this gospel preaching "wee understand not onely the Scriptures of the new Testament, but also ... the Law, Prophets, and Histories, *in which Christ Jesus is no lesse contained in figure*, then wee have him now expressed in veritie."[1] The "six Johns" – Douglas, Knox, Row, Spottiswoode, Willock, Winram – authors of *The First Book of Discipline*, assumed that typology – an exegetical approach that claimed that certain people, places, events, and objects in the Bible foreshadowed later people, places, events, and objects – would be integral to Scotland's reformation.[2] Indeed, they were proved largely right. In the seventeenth century, typological language

pervaded throughout Scotland's churches. Scots like William Guild (1586–1657) and John Weemes (c. 1579–1636) were at the forefront of publishing typological works. Guild's pioneering typological handbook, *Moses Unvailed* (1620), provided a systematic guide to Old Testament types and their anti-types, while Weemes' *The Christian Synagogue* (1623) and *An Exposition of the Lawes of Moses* (1632) offered nuanced treatments of Reformed exegesis.

The six Johns and their exegetical successors adhered to the view that the primary purpose of types was to reveal Christ. In reality though, Scots' typological exegesis cannot always be explained quite so simply, since they often found much broader applications for biblical typology than the Christocentric language of *The First Book of Discipline* would suggest. As Victoria Brownlee put it in her recent study of early modern typology, "typological readings could stretch from more plausible identifications" focused on Christ through "to associations that required much greater imagination."[3] Indeed, this variety of expositions raises questions about what Reformed Protestants actually meant by their belief that "scripture had one literal sense."[4] Like the English theologian William Perkins, Scottish Protestants rejected the medieval *quadriga* on the grounds that to "make many senses of scripture, is to overturne all sense, and to make nothing certen."[5] While this approach certainly allowed room for typological interpretation, since they believed that some texts were figurative by divine intention, varied readings of a biblical type raises questions about early modern Scots' commitment to this principle.

This article explores how one Old Testament type – the brazen serpent – was expounded in different contexts and for different ends in Scotland.[6] It begins by examining how the brazen serpent's elevation and destruction were interpreted typologically, before using William Guild as a case study in order to assess how this

type functioned within biblical exegesis as a whole. In so doing, this article aims to uncover the flexibility of typological application, while arguing that biblical interpretation in early modern Scotland was still grounded in the Reformed commitment to a single, literal sense.

Raising the brazen serpent

The raised brazen serpent was among the most familiar biblical images for learned early modern Scots. It first appeared in Numbers 21:9: "Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived."[7] However, John's Gospel cemented its importance. In John 3:14-15, Jesus connected the brazen serpent's elevation to the Son of Man's: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."[8] This dominical endorsement ensured that this typological parallel enjoyed near universal acceptance. It was widely understood and resonated deeply in early modern Scotland, particularly among the clergy and literate laity. It also appears to have been used more frequently in Scottish printed works than other parallels outlined in the Gospels, such as the link between Jonah and Christ.[9] Precisely why this was the case is a matter for speculation. The Geneva Bible offered no extended commentary on either Numbers 21:9 or John 3:14-15, other than to connect the two passages, but this did not deter Scottish interpreters from offering more elaborate expositions of the raised brazen serpent.[10]

Scots' repeated invocation of this type, and elucidation of a variety of edifying applications from it, suggests that they saw the brazen serpent – when examined in detail – as a fitting cipher for Reformed godliness. John Welch (1568?–1622), the

son-in-law of John Knox, exhorted his congregation to look to Christ's "Blood with the Eye of Faith" because "it shall heal the Sting of thy Conscience, as they that but looked to the brazen Serpent, that was a Figure of Christ, they were preserved from the Sting of the Fiery Serpents in the Wilderness."[11] In many respects Welch's statement is quite unremarkable: he followed John's Gospel in interpreting the brazen serpent as a type of Christ's death. Yet it also illuminates how Scots read the Bible, since the notion of the brazen serpent's ability to cure stings derives from Numbers 21, rather than John 3. The New Testament articulated the view that the raised brazen serpent foreshadowed Christ's salvific work on the cross, but Welch mined the type's original appearance in the Pentateuch in order to extract additional information that could shed light on the spiritual benefits of Christ's redemptive work. Yet even this does not fully explain Welch's reading of the text, since Numbers referred to a physical rather than a spiritual ailment. Welch's decision to apply this type to the individual believer's conscience highlights how early modern preachers strove to balance the emphases of the biblical text with the needs of the congregation. Alec Ryrie has argued that emotions like despair and anxiety were an integral part of early modern Protestants' experience because, amongst other reasons, they enabled them to 'judge how the universal revelation of Scripture applied to them personally'.[12] So it should not surprise us that Protestant preachers also sought to draw out the practical applications of their texts for their hearers. Welch's exposition reveals his pastoral concerns: he deliberately framed his exposition to spiritually comfort his congregation. The brazen serpent type showed how Christ was a healing balm for the afflicted soul, rather than simply its saviour.[13] However, in interpreting the brazen serpent in this way, Welch expanded the type's meaning, if not shifted it altogether.

Nor was Welch alone in interpreting the brazen serpent in this way. Scottish preachers frequently invoked the brazen serpent in their sermons. Peter Hewat, for a time minister in Edinburgh, used it to instruct his hearers about the necessity of fixing their faith upon Christ: "there is no way of salvation but this onely, by fastening the eyes of thy faith upon this JESUS CHRIST."[14] The brazen serpent type underscored Hewat's central point that his congregation must look to Christ. However, he also talked up the benefits of focusing their gaze, which were "figured of old in the brasen Serpent".[15] He claimed that "by looking to it, and trusting to Gods promise, they were cured; so by fastning the eyes of thy soule upon JESUS CHRIST the promised Redeemer, thou art spiritually made whole, and restored to life."[16] Hewat claimed that focusing on Christ, as the Israelites had on the brazen serpent, could bring about full, spiritual restoration. The precise details of this spiritual restoration were not fully elucidated, but Hewat clearly sought to give the impression that it was rather more wide-ranging than a strict reading of the text might suggest.

William Colville (d. 1675), who served both as a minister and as Principal of the University of Edinburgh, echoed these themes in his sermons on Isaiah 11: "He hath taken the sting from death: to the godly it is as the brazen serpent in this wilderness, it has not a sting; but will cure us fully of all the stings we got here".[17] These included "the sting of temptation ... a guilty conscience; and ... venemous tongues."[18] Colville offered a variation on a common refrain: the brazen serpent foreshadowed Christ's work, not simply in removing the sting of death, but also in healing the "stings" of temptation, guilt, and verbal attacks. The brazen serpent's ability to cure wounds was evidently a popular image for Scottish preachers who wanted to emphasise the full extent of Christ's restorative powers.

Those who listened to these sermonic pronouncements concerning Christ, the true brazen serpent, could also be deeply affected by the parallels that they heard expounded. Writing around the end of the seventeenth century, Jean Collace recorded that she had "sinned by rejecting the counsel of God in warning me not to go to a place."[19] The precise nature of her sin is unclear, although it obviously caused her significant distress. She recalled that it "was a sore wound in my soul for a time."[20] The remedy to her spiritual distress only came when she heard the brazen serpent invoked as a type in a sermon:

> It pleased the Lord in his great mercy to my soul, that after I was made to take with my guilt and humble my soul before him, he took me to the word where Mr Hog was preaching the necessity of the application of the righteousness of Christ to the soul sensible of sin and wounded, therefore citing that place when the children of Israel were stung with the fiery serpents, their looking up by faith to the brazen serpent cured them, and this only a type of Christ with which my soul closed by application, and obtained healing, peace, and strength to my soul.[21]

Lay Protestants like Collace took the types that they heard to heart and applied them directly in their lives. Types served as powerful spurs to spiritual comfort and renewed godliness. A typological reading of the brazen serpent offered Collace a deep and meaningful cure for her spiritual affliction, thereby renewing her spiritual vitality.

Biblical types, like this, could also become the focal point for Protestants' spiritual affections. In 1687, while still in his late teens, James Nisbet waxed lyrical about various Old Testament types that were fulfilled in Christ, including the brazen serpent: "He is the great antitype of the brazen serpent, lifted up on the pole of the cross, that all sin-stung and wrath-strung sinners might look to him and be healed."[22] Reflecting on this and other typological parallels, he exhorted himself: "O then, my soul! be no more bewitched with the perishing pleasures of this transitory life ... fly

fast in unto the warm bosom and outstretched redeeming arms of this dear Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ."[23] David Mullan rightly described Nisbet's reflection as "euphoric".[24] One may well put such language down to youthful enthusiasm, but this does not negate the fact that types could stimulate early modern Scots' spiritual affections for Christ. Old Testament types, like the brazen serpent, captured Nisbet's imagination and fuelled his religious fervour.

Other Scots, however, used the raised brazen serpent to offer theological instruction, though their doctrinal emphases could vary. In his seventy-two sermons on Isaiah 53, James Durham (1622–58) specifically linked this type to the doctrine of justification by faith. In Sermon 59, he said: "Christ lifted up, and as dying on the Cross, is made the Object of Justifying Faith; even as the brazen Serpent lifted up was the Object that they looked to, when they were stung, and cured."[25] He returned to this type in Sermon 61 to explain this key Protestant doctrine in more detail:

> the brazen Serpent was proposed to them that were stung, and ... there was no healling to the stung Israelites except they looked to it ... So Christ Jesus proposed as the Object, and meritorious Cause of Justification, Justifies none but such as look to Him by Faith; and although they were to look to the Brazen Serpent, yet their look gave no efficacy to the cure, but it flowed from Gods ordaining that as a mean of their Cure; even so it is not from any efficacy in Faith considered in it self, that Sinners are Justified, but it is from Jesus Christ the Object, that Faith eyeing Him lifted up, as the Saviour of the elect, and His Satisfaction as appointed of God for that end, doth Justifie: and therefore it may well be called an instrumental cause...[26]

Durham drew the parallel between the brazen serpent and Christ, but deliberately steered this towards a Reformed understanding of justification by faith, in which Christ was understood as the "meritorious cause" (*causa meritoria*) and faith as the "instrumental cause" (*causa instrumentalis*) of justification.[27] Given this, it is clear

that the brazen serpent type could be used to instruct Christians in technical points of Reformed soteriology, as well as to extend comfort to troubled consciences or show how the Old Testament foreshadowed the New.[28]

These examples of early modern expositions of the raised brazen serpent illustrate just some of the ways in which a single type could be employed. Yet even these examples provide ample evidence that spiritual edification – the "building up the church, of the soul, in faith and holiness; the imparting of moral and spiritual stability and strength by suitable instruction and exhortation" – was one of the primary by-products of early modern typological exegesis.[29] Expositions of the raised brazen serpent type were undoubtedly Christocentric, but this statement alone is insufficient to explain fully how types were used in early modern Scotland. Whether to offer spiritual comfort or doctrinal instruction, and whether in sermons or other contexts, types had the potential to edify the godly, and Reformed exegetes frequently expounded the raised brazen serpent with this aim in mind.

Destroying the brazen serpent

While ministers and lay people alike emphasised the spiritual benefits of looking to Christ, their raised brazen serpent, they also dwelt on the significance of King Hezekiah tearing down the brazen serpent during his reign. 2 Kings 18 recounted how the brazen serpent had become an object of worship for the Israelites and emphasised Hezekiah's godly zeal in destroying this idol upon his ascension to the throne:

> [Hezekiah] removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan. He trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.[30]

The brazen serpent's destruction was expounded less frequently than its elevation in the wilderness, but Scottish exegetes also interpreted this passage typologically, despite the lack of an explicit New Testament warrant. Seemingly the parallel between the raised brazen serpent and Christ's crucifixion provided sufficient grounds to justify expounding 2 Kings 18 typologically too. Exegetes did not, however, primarily utilise this account to further spiritual edification, but to bolster their arguments about contemporary religious issues and help advance their cause.

In the late sixteenth century, John Napier (1550–1617), the mathematician and inventor of logarithms, used this type to critique his religious opponents.[31] In his seminal commentary on Revelation, *A Plaine Discoverie of the Whole Revelation of Saint John* (1593), Napier took the Israelites' worship of the brazen serpent as prefiguring a superstitious trust in various signs of the cross:

> Appointed not God the brasen serpent to be erected, as healthful, but after that it was worshipped, it was destroied by Ezechias as damnable? ... how much more ought we to reject these ... crosses of all kindes ... which they call our Lords crosse ... S. Georges crosse ... S. Andrews crosse ... and manie crosses moe, & esteeme thē as abominable Antichristian badges, whereas we see thē not onelie devised by men, but also abused by them ... imputing unto these naked figures, a vertue & sanctitude in their charmes & exorcisms, as thogh, the whol vertue of Christ & his passion, were transferred over into thē.[32]

Napier contended that just as the Israelites had overestimated the importance of the brazen serpent, some of his contemporaries had also attributed too much significance to physical crosses. Indeed, this concern over physical crosses was a recurring theme of Protestant rhetoric. Scots at the end of the seventeenth century, like Robert Craghead (c. 1633–1711), articulated similar views.[33] On the surface, Napier used this Old Testament type as a means of attacking opponents who valued these "abominable Antichristian badges". It was straightforward polemical rhetoric that sought to

discredit Catholics' religious practice. Yet this also appears to have been more than a cheap shot. Napier used this type because he wanted his audience to follow Hezekiah's destruction of the brazen serpent and eliminate these signs. Napier's exposition suggests that he was not first and foremost driven by a desire for polemical point scoring, but by a concern to see the kirk reformed and free of Catholic practices. A call to action was implicit within his exposition.

This type also found an imaginative context in the work of the poet and historian, Henry Adamson (c.1581–1637).[34] In his posthumously published poem, *The Muses Threnodie* (1638), Adamson imagined that "Nehushtan" – the name given to the brazen serpent by the Israelites – was on the lips of John Knox and his contemporaries during the Scottish Reformers' iconoclastic attacks:

> The houre was come, and then our Knox did sound,
> Pull down their idols, throw them to the ground.
> The multitude, even as a spear, did rush then
> In poulder beat; and cald them all Nehushtan.[35]

Although expressed as part of a poetic reflection on the Reformation, Adamson's allusion to 2 Kings 18 reflects the fact that the brazen serpent type was a staple feature of Protestants' arguments against idolatry. The shorthand reference to Nehushtan suggests that Adamson thought his readers were sufficiently familiar with the events of 2 Kings 18 and that further clarification was unnecessary. He may have assumed a high level of biblical literacy amongst his readers. Alternatively, his shorthand may suggest that this parallel between the brazen serpent and idolatrous worship was so frequently articulated that it was firmly embedded in the collective consciousness, and needed no further explanation. In either case, *The Muses Threnodie* highlights the widespread presence of polemical applications of typology

in seventeenth-century Scotland.

While the destruction of the brazen serpent was often used to advance Protestant polemics against Catholicism, some ministers also drew political implications for magistrates from Hezekiah's actions. For example, David Dickson (c.1583–1662), minister in Irvine and a key leader in the covenanting revolution, argued that magistrates had a duty to ensure that "Blasphemies, and Heresies be suppressed, all the ordinances of God, duely settled, administred, and observed; all abuses in worship, and discipline reformed, all Idolaters, Gainsayers, and other obstinate dissenters, be obliged and forced to quite their tenets and opinions".[36] He added that magistrates must also ensure that this group "conform themselves to the true worship".[37] He justified such wide-ranging authority for the magistrate on the basis that King Hezekiah "brake in pieces the brazen Serpent, to which the Israelites did burn incense."[38] Hezekiah's kingly role in curtailing Israel's idolatry provided the scriptural basis for Dickson's application of the brazen serpent to seventeenth-century Scottish magistrates. So while polemical readings primarily focused on how the brazen serpent had become an idolatrous object of worship for the Israelites, political readings primarily focused on the role of King Hezekiah in the brazen serpent's destruction. This difference in focus goes some way to explaining how exegetes were able to derive varied applications from a single image.

In political contexts, typological parallels could also serve as a means by which to cajole rulers into godly action. In a 1690 sermon preached before the Earl of Melville, John Spalding (d. 1699), minister in Kirkcudbright, spoke of the dangers of imitating Jehu who "destroyed Baal and his Priests ... yet he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam".[39] Instead, he exhorted his audience to reflect on Hezekiah's wholehearted attempts at reform:

> consider that good King Hezekiah was not guided by this carnal Policy in his reformation, 2 King. 18. 4. But in the first year of his reign (*which I pray and hope our King shall make the parallel of*) removed the high places, brake down the images, cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent, (tho Moses made it) and called it Nehushtan.[40]

In this instance, Spalding used typological language to try and persuade the Earl of Melville, and ultimately the king, to adopt a wholehearted approach to reform. Typological exegesis normally presented a divine perspective on how God had sovereignly arranged events to foreshadow later biblical or historical events, but Spalding's sermon offered a more grounded viewpoint on how the king might fulfil these types. Either the king could choose to be the parallel of Hezekiah, by following his pattern of reform, or he would become the fulfilment of Jehu by default. The interplay between sermonic rhetoric and typological patterns of thought is striking. By using typological language, while steering clear of using precise terminology such as "type", Spalding sought to infer that the king's actions would be seen within the providential framework of the Old Testament kings without actually saying as much. In this context, typological language worked as a rhetorical tool to try and persuade rulers to act in a godly manner by inferring that there was a link between them and the biblical monarch. As Kevin Killeen aptly put it while referring to another episode from Hezekiah's life: authorities "needed to merit such a typology by behaving like Hezekiah".[41]

Scottish exegetes built on the well-established norm of interpreting the brazen serpent's elevation typologically by expounding its destruction in a similar vein. They, of course, recognised that edifying interpretations lacked sensitivity to the biblical text, so they made the brazen serpent's destruction a rallying cry for their reforming aspirations instead. Zeal for Christ's kirk compelled Scots both to oppose

Catholicism and to push for further reform. In order to make their case effectively, they used typology or, occasionally, typological language. For in some instances, their use of biblical figures stretched the boundaries of what could legitimately be defined as typology. Indeed, one Scottish handbook of biblical types noted that "some things heere are rather for convenience of case compared, then any typicall signification is in them sought".[42] In theory, a sharp distinction existed between strict typology, which inferred divine intention, and comparisons, which depended on the exegete's spiritual insight. Yet the boundaries between the two categories were often blurred in practice, especially when works were strongly motivated by reforming zeal. It seems highly doubtful that most readers and hearers were aware of this distinction, let alone able to spot when it was subverted. As a result, exegetes like John Spalding could harness the rhetorical force of typology – with its inherent assumption that events were guided by God's providential hand – without actually claiming that a particular parallel was sovereignly arranged. This practice meant that exegetes could enhance their polemical and political arguments without slipping into medieval figurative exegesis. It ensured that they remained within the accepted boundaries of Reformed hermeneutics, even if they were leaning over the perimeter at times.

Utilising the brazen serpent

Having outlined the range of ways in which the brazen serpent could be applied in early modern Scotland – for edifying and rhetorical purposes alike – the final section of this article seeks to assess how types practically functioned within Scots' biblical exegesis. As Scotland's most prolific typological exegete, William Guild offers a fine case study. Guild was a second-generation Protestant who served as a minister for more than three decades, first in rural Aberdeenshire and then in New Aberdeen,

before taking up the role of principal at King's College, Aberdeen in 1640.[43] In addition to penning *Moses Unvailed* (1620), the typological handbook for which he is best known, Guild interwove biblical types throughout his publications. By focusing on how the brazen serpent type was deployed across a variety of his publications, it is possible to gain a better understanding of how typology functioned in practice in early modern biblical exegesis.

Like his contemporaries, Guild used the brazen serpent for edifying purposes. In *Moses Unvailed* – the sort of biblical study aid that Ian Green claimed was aimed at "lesser clergy, ordinands, and lay men and women" that "had limited or no knowledge of ancient languages" but "were moderately well educated, had some spare cash, and the time and inclination to enter the deeper waters of scripture with help from the specialists" – Guild set out ten parallels between the brazen serpent and Christ, which would have served to educate his readers.[44] According to Guild, the brazen serpent revealed Christ's sinless nature, his "base and humble" appearance, his divine origins, his unique ability to redeem, the manner of his death, and more.[45] In other words, Guild used this type to articulate a simplified Christology, which could be easily understood and pointed out both Christ's divine and human attributes. Such parallels were perfectly designed to educate a lay audience, such as his rural parishioners, in the basics of Christian theology, through the use of clear, biblical imagery.

In the same work, Guild also drew out the polemical applications of this type. His comments on the destruction of the brazen serpent demonstrated an iconoclastic impulse, which he applied broadly to various forms of idolatrous worship. He noted that although the brazen serpent "was instituted by GOD" it was also "Idolatrously abused" and so "destroyed, by that godly King, Hezechiah".[46] In his view this showed

"how lawfull by the like example, and much more likewise, Images and other invensions, turning to an idolatrous or superstitious abuse, their abrogating is in a reformed Christian Church."[47] Guild took the destruction of the brazen serpent as justification for removing idols and images from churches. Although expressed in relatively restrained terms, Guild's typological exposition provides clear evidence of his anti-Catholic sentiment. His somewhat vague reference to "other invensions", however, might suggest that he also had James VI's liturgical innovations – the Five Articles of Perth – in mind when drawing this comparison.[48] In other words, Guild did not interpret this type as prefiguring one specific issue, as John Napier had. Instead, he used it to address a range of corrupt practices, thereby signalling the need for continued purification of Reformed worship. By invoking this connection, Guild was framing Scotland's seventeenth-century religious disputes in the context of Israel's history.[49]

However, the brazen serpent's familiarity in early modern Scotland meant that it was not only put to use when interpreting Numbers 21, 2 Kings 18, or John 3 specifically, but when expounding a range of biblical passages. In his commentary on the Song of Songs, *Loves Entercours Between the Lamb and His Bride* (1657), Guild invoked the brazen serpent, allowing him to shift subtly the focus of his interpretation. Following the conventions of his day, Guild predominantly interpreted the Song of Songs allegorically.[50] In his exposition of Song of Songs 1:13 – "A bundle of myrrh is my wellbeloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts"– he offered an allegorical interpretation *par excellence*:

> the Church professes her spirituall comfort which she had in Christ and of his death and resurrection; the feeling whereof is like a sweet odour to a believing soul, and which she would be so carefull to conserve, and apply in all estates, unto her selfe by the work of faith, that all the night time of his life, or of

> affliction and tentation (noted, by a dark time) she would make him her continuall joy and comfort, solacing her selfe in him, and that he should lye between her breasts, and constantly dwell in her heart, by Faith and true affection.[51]

For Guild, this verse represented the intimate proximity that was to characterise the Church's relationship with Christ. As his exposition progressed, however, he also used the brazen serpent to expand the meaning of his interpretation. He argued that the bride did not simply lay the bridegroom between her breasts for spiritual joy and comfort, but also "for remembrance and contemplation that she may have him still in remembrance and before her eyes, to looke upon, as Israel did upon the brasen Serpent".[52] The idea of the bride looking upon the bridegroom is not easily deduced from this verse, so the inclusion of the brazen serpent type served an important role in stabilising Guild's argument and demonstrating that there was biblical support for such a view. Typological expositions such as this testify to the inter-textual nature of exegesis. Drawing types from other books was a useful practice. It allowed interpreters like Guild to deploy an exegetical diversion and subtly shift the meaning of the verse being expounded. Of course, Guild would not have viewed his exegesis in such cynical terms. He almost certainly thought this interpretation was justifiable because he was expounding his text in a wider scriptural context. J.I. Packer argued that the Puritans interpreted Scripture "consistently and harmonistically", seeing it as "the expression of single divine mind" with "no real contradiction between part and part."[53] No doubt this was also how Guild viewed his own exegesis. Nevertheless, it is clear that typology could be employed to shift the focus of a text's interpretation.

In other cases, Guild shifted the emphasis of the brazen serpent type itself in order to reinforce his reading of a text. In his commentary on Revelation, *The Sealed Book Opened* (1656), Guild utilised the brazen serpent to support his exposition of

Revelation 9:6: "in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them."[54] Rather than interpreting the raised brazen serpent in an edifying way, as was the norm, Guild gave it a deliberately polemical slant:

> we see the wofull estate of the tormented conscience of a simple seduced soul, not knowing the true remedy of a wounded spirit, to wit, like the stung Israelites to look up only to the brasen Serpent, which made these poor souls to do or bequeath what they would have them, to find ease to their conscience.[55]

This example illustrates how early modern exegetes could turn a typological comparison on its head, to focus on its negative implications, when speaking of their theological opponents. This type was normally used to assure Protestant believers of their salvation, but in this instance Guild used it to highlight the state of the ungodly. The malleability of this image to suit the exegetes' purposes serves as a reminder that exegetes could play up certain aspects of a typological image, in order to support their arguments.

On at least one occasion Guild even subverted the brazen serpent type in order to encourage spiritual desire for Christ amongst his hearers. In 1639, at the outbreak of the Bishops' War, he fled to the Baltic port of Danzig (now Gdańsk). While he was there, Guild preached to the English congregation. Fittingly for a communion sermon he chose 1 Corinthians 5:7 – "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" – as his text.[56] In this sermon, which was published later that year as *The Christians Passover*, Guild drew numerous parallels between the Passover lamb and Christ, exhorting his audience to feed on Christ: "the lamb was to be eaten, to shew that even so must our saviour Christ be applyed particularlie, and fed upon spirituallie".[57] This much would have been fairly common place, but how Guild went onto describe the

proper response to Christ is remarkable: "he is not like that brasen serpent in the wildernes, onlie to be looked upon seriouslie, but like manna which come downe from heaven ... to be fed upon greedylie".[58] In his endeavour to emphasise the need for his congregation to feed on Christ, Guild downplayed the usefulness of the brazen serpent as a type of Christ.

In *Moses Unvailed,* published nineteen years before *The Christians Passover*, Guild had stressed that Christians could simply look to Christ, as the Israelites had looked to the brazen serpent: "They were onely cured who looked upon the same. So they onely are redeemed from death to eternall life, who onely by faith eyes him ... beleeving in Christ, & that crucified."[59] Did Guild's sermon on *The Christians Passover* represent a departure from his earlier theology? Possibly, although this seems unlikely given that he invoked the brazen serpent type just four years prior in his 1635 funeral sermon for the former Bishop of Aberdeen, Patrick Forbes: "This therefore is the right arte of dying well, to get true fayth, and to fix the eye thereof (as the people in the wildernesse did) upon that true brasen Serpent, CHRIST JESUS, the Lord of lyfe."[60] Guild's dismissive comment about looking to the brazen serpent should not be taken as evidence of a shift in his soteriology, or even in his understanding of this type. It was simply a rhetorical flourish, deployed specifically in the context of a communion sermon. It is nonetheless revealing. It demonstrates that Guild adopted, at times, a somewhat fluid approach to typological exegesis. He was prepared to ignore, or even argue against, a type articulated by Christ if it served the purpose of his sermon.

It is clear that typology was an essential part of Guild's exegetical approach. Although he expounded a range of textual genres – including poems, epistles, and prophecies – typology remained a persistent feature of his exegesis. Using types like

the brazen serpent allowed Guild to make interpretative manoeuvres that would have been problematic if he remained rigidly focused on the passage in hand, given the prevailing emphasis on a literal reading of the text. Sometimes it allowed him to shift the focus of a passage, encouraging a more active form of devotion.[61] At other times, invoking a type allowed him to reinforce a point, even if that meant berating the brazen serpent in the process.[62] In either case, typology served a vital function in Guild's attempts to apply his passage to his hearers and readers.

Conclusion

In *The First Book of Discipline* the six Johns emphasised that Scottish preachers were to draw on the Old Testament, which contained Christ in figure, as well as the New. Yet when Scottish Protestants duly scoured the pages of the Old Testament they not only discovered foreshadows of Christ, but also of Reformed doctrine and piety. The raised brazen serpent not only prefigured Christ, but also the doctrine of justification. Its elevation in the wilderness, not only foreshadowed Christ's crucifixion, but also a vast array of spiritual benefits that the Christian might expect if they would only fix their gaze upon Christ. The destroyed brazen serpent not only pictured the distortion of true Christian worship, but also offered guidance for godly rulers. By attending to the finer details of the type's original context, early modern exegetes were able to uncover a multiplicity of applications for their own context. In this respect, early modern Scottish exegesis was rather more varied than is normally realised.

Yet despite the diversity of applications that Scottish interpreters were capable of drawing from Old Testament figures, their exegesis still possessed a coherent logic and clear parameters. Scots' expositions of the brazen serpent aligned closely with the four-fold division of Scripture outlined in 2 Timothy 3:16: "All scripture is given by

inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness".[63] Exegetes may not have stated it explicitly, and probably did it subconsciously, but their typological expositions naturally pulled towards these four ends. It allowed them to teach central Reformed doctrines, reprove false teaching, correct errant practices, and instruct both rulers and their congregations in godly piety. These four uses of Scripture marked the boundaries of typological exegesis, as much as any other form of biblical interpretation. So though their interpretations of biblical types could appear more varied than one might anticipate given the strong Reformed emphasis on a literal reading of Scripture, they were not endless. Exegetes did not use typology as a vehicle for unrestrained figurative interpretation, but as a means to apply the literal sense of the text more fully to their own context. Even when they sought to give the impression that a comparison had the weight of a divinely arranged type, they were careful to avoid actually saying as much.

It is also clear that biblical types often functioned as tropes for early modern Scots. Exegetes repeatedly invoked typological images in order to bolster their arguments, even when they were not the focus of their expositions. This habit serves as a vital reminder that well-known types functioned like a common language for early modern Scots. Whether they were wrestling with spiritual afflictions, striving to communicate Reformed doctrine, or seeking to address perversions in the kirk's worship, Scottish Protestants were drawn to types. The brazen serpent was certainly one of the most popular biblical figures, but the way in which it was used was not unique. Scots frequently employed this exegetical method. Acknowledging the sheer variety of ways in which learned Scottish Protestants applied biblical types, and the range of contexts in which types like the brazen serpent were used, reveals how

intuitively they thought in biblical terms and how deeply these biblical patterns of thought shaped their understanding of their own world.

Notes

[1] Cameron (ed.), *First Book of Discipline*, 87 (emphasis mine).

[2] Scholars have produced a range of definitions for typology. See Woollcombe, "Patristic Development of Typology", 39-40; Madsen, *Shadowy Types to Truth*, 2-3; Reinitz, "Symbolism and Freedom", 1. This definition aims to avoid the tendencies to either limit typology so strictly that only parallels explicitly articulated in the New Testament can be considered typological *or* to embrace such a broad definition that no biblical basis is required. It aims to provide sufficient breadth to allow for the appearance of anti-types outside of the New Testament canon, without abandoning the sense that typology is an exegetical tool and not simply a literary device.

[3] Brownlee, *Biblical Readings*, 30.

[4] Trueman, "Scripture and Exegesis", 189.

[5] Perkins, *Epistle to the Galatians*, 346. The *quadriga* refers to a common medieval method of biblical interpretation, which claims that Scripture has four senses: literal, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical.

[6] There are no published studies of typology in early modern Scotland. For the fullest study to date see: Newton, "Godliness Unveiled". For studies of typology in early modern England and New England (in addition to those already mentioned) see: Bercovitch, "Typology"; Zwicker, *Dryden's Political Poetry*; Galdon, *Typology and Seventeenth Century*; Miner (ed.), *Literary Uses of Typology*; Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics*; Lowance, Jr., *Language of Canaan*; Clark, *Christ Revealed*; Korshin, *Typologies in England*; Dickson, *Fountain of Living Waters*; Dickson, "Complexities of Biblical Typology"; Hardman Moore, "Sacrifice in Puritan Typology"; Hardman Moore, "Sexing the Soul"; Hardman Moore, "For the Mind's Eye"; Killeen, *Political Bible*.

[7] Numbers 21:9. All biblical quotations from the KJV.

[8] John 3:14-15.

[9] "[F]or as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Matthew 12:40.

[10] *The Bible*, 73v, 52r.

[11] Welch, *Forty Eight Select Sermons*, 210.

[12] Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 41.

[13] Scholars have observed that early modern Protestantism was often an affective pursuit. For example, Charles Hambrick-Stowe wrote the following of New England: "The reading and study of religious texts, though an intellectual activity, did not primarily or finally have an intellectual end. The exercise of the rational faculty opened the way to a changed heart." Hambrick-Stowe, *Practice of Piety*, 157-8.

[14] Hewat, *Three Excellent Points*, Gr. According to David Mullan, Hewat was "promoted at the expressed wishes of King James to the ministry of Edinburgh but deprived following a protest in 1617". Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism, 1590-1638*, 118.

[15] Hewat, *Three Excellent Points*, Gr.

[16] Hewat, *Three Excellent Points*, Gr.

[17] Colville, *The Righteous Branch*, 245; Pearce, "Colville, William", xii.831.

[18] Colville, *The Righteous Branch*, 245.

[19] Collace, "Some Short Remembrances", 99-100.

[20] Collace, "Some Short Remembrances", 100.

[21] Collace, "Some Short Remembrances", 100.

[22] Nisbet, *Private Life*, 194.

[23] Nisbet, *Private Life*, 196.

[24] Mullan, *Narratives*, 277.

[25] Durham, *Christ Crucified*, 473.

[26] Durham, *Christ Crucified*, 490.

[27] Richard Muller defines *causa meritoria* as "an intermediate or instrumental cause that contributes to a desired effect by rendering the effect worthy of taking place. Thus, Christ's death is the *causa meritoria* of human salvation". Whereas, he describes *causa instrumentalis* as "the means, or medium used to bring about a desired effect, distinct from the material and formal causes..." Muller, *Theological Terms*, 62–3.

[28] This emphasis was not distinct to seventeenth-century Scottish sermons. The brazen serpent type also appeared in Hans Holbein the Younger's painting "An Allegory of the Old and New Testaments", which he produced in the early 1530s. Above the brazen serpent, Holbein wrote the Latin words "Mysterium Justificationis", which indicates that he had also connected this type to the doctrine of justification. See: https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/5663/allegory-old-and-new-testaments (accessed 14 May 2019).

[29] "edification, n.". OED Online. March 2019. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/59532?redirectedFrom=edification (accessed 14 May 2019).

[30] 2 Kings 18:4-5.

[31] See: Molland, "Napier, John, of Merchiston", xl.171-5; Corrigan, "John Napier", 39-83; Rice, "John Napier", 3-59.

[32] Napier, *Plaine Discovery*, 58-9.

[33] Craghead, *Modest Apology*, 75-6.

[34] Craik, "Adamson, Henry", i.283-4.

[35] Adamson, *Muses Threnodie*, 55.

[36] Dickson, *Truths Victory Over Error*, 207-8; Holfelder, "Dickson [Dick], David", xvi.116.

[37] Dickson, *Truths Victory Over Error*, 208.

[38] Dickson, *Truths Victory Over Error*, 209.

[39] Spalding, *Sermon Preached*, 16-7; Scott, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanae*, ii.417, v.320.

[40] Spalding, *Sermon Preached*, 17 (emphasis mine).

[41] Killeen, *Political Bible*, 87.

[42] Guild, *Moses Unvailed*, 175.

[43] Shirrefs, *Inquiry*; Wells, "Guild, William", xxiv.185-6; Newton, "Godliness Unveiled", 31-92.

[44] Green, *Print and Protestantism*, 103.

[45] Guild, *Moses Unvailed*, 85-7.

[46] Guild, *Moses Unvailed*, 87.

[47] Guild, *Moses Unvailed*, 87.

[48] The five articles of Perth authorised: kneeling for communion; private communion for the sick; private baptism in some cases; confirmation of children aged eight; and the celebration of selected Holy Days, such as Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. See: Donaldson (ed.), *Scottish Historical Documents*, 184-5.

[49] Polemical uses of the brazen serpent were not unique to Scotland and similar language can also be found in Protestant works printed in England. For example see: Fulke, *Three Pillers*, 580; Anon., *The Contre-League*, 70; Burges, *No Sacrilege Nor Sin*, 17.

[50] For an early modern defence for why the Song of Songs should be interpreted allegorically see: Durham, *Clavis Cantici*, 1-42. For scholarly discussions of the Song of Songs in this period, see: Scheper, "Reformation Attitudes", 551-62; Clarke, *Song of Songs*; Richard, "*Clavis Cantici*", 157-73.

[51] Song of Songs 1:13; Guild, *Loves Entercours*, 67.

[52] Guild, *Loves Entercours*, 70.

[53] Packer, *Quest for Godliness*, 102.

[54] Revelation 9:6.

[55] Guild, *Sealed Book Opened*, 89.

[56] 1 Corinthians 5:7.

[57] Guild, *Christians Passover*, no pagination.

[58] Guild, *Christians Passover*, no pagination.

[59] Guild, *Moses Unvailed*, 86.

[60] Guild, "A Sermon", 87.

[61] Guild, *Loves Entercours*, 70.

[62] Guild, *Sealed Book Opened*, 89; Guild, *Christians Passover*, no pagination.

[63] 2 Timothy 3:16.

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